

Council on Greenways & Trails

January 11, 2012

Delaware Department of Agriculture

2320 South DuPont Highway

Dover, Delaware 19901

9:30 AM

Welcome & Introductions

Peggy Koster, acting Chairperson and Sussex County Council Representative, called the Council meeting to order at 9:33 a.m. She invited members and visitors to introduce themselves and identify their group affiliation or agency.

Approval Meeting Minutes

Peggy Koster asked for a motion to approve the August 10, 2011 minutes with corrections. Mary Everhart seconded. Motion passed.

Trail Updates

First State Trail & Pathway Initiative overview - Collin O'Mara, Secretary DNREC

Secretary O'Mara introduced and presented the Trail & Pathway Initiative to Council. He said, the chances for advancement of recreational trails are now much greater as Governor Markell's administration has placed high importance on increasing trail opportunities for bikers and pedestrians. DNREC and DelDOT developed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) setting out goals for trails in Delaware. Secretary O'Mara identified priority areas in State Parks, and within communities, that build on the existing network of trails and pathways for investments, noting the list will grow:

- C&D Canal
- Northern DE Greenway Trail – filling gaps
- New Castle Industrial Track Trail that runs concurrently with the East Coast Greenway Trail
- White Clay Creek State Park
- St. Jones River Trail – fill gap link to the Isaac Branch Trail
- Killens Pond State Park
- Trap Pond State Park
- Junction & Breakwater Trail
- Assawoman Canal – link Ocean View, Bethany & South Bethany and area residential communities

Ms. Koster asked Secretary O'Mara what could Council do to help advocate continued funding for future trails. Secretary O'Mara thanked Council for its concerns and said the Council could assist in four ways:

- Continue in its role as the sounding board for DNREC by ensuring that DNREC leads in trail projects and that this makes investment sense;
- Become vocal trail advocates with their local elected officials and communities. Many of the projects [listed] are eligible for Community Transportation Funds [from DelDOT];
- Be active during the Bond Bill session, making sure that General Assembly members and the general public are aware of the importance of trails;
- Be outspoken advocates in the press; emphasize projects by getting the word out to promote and raise the profile of trails, and DNREC.

Outdoor Recreational Trail Use Trends & Patterns - Kendall Sommers

Kendall gave an update on linear related recreational facilities taken from the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) research. She pointed out statewide outdoor recreation participation

trends, outlined current barriers to active recreation in Delaware, and identified the public's demand on outdoor recreation facilities.

In August 2011, the Division conducted a Public Outdoor Recreation Needs & Trends Telephone Survey, of over 2000 participants. The survey gathered information which focused mainly on outdoor recreation demand. One of the questions asked was, 'How is outdoor recreation important to you?' Almost two-thirds of Delawareans believe programs are a necessity for the quality of life and ninety percent, or more, believe outdoor recreation is important to them. This response resonates statewide. Kendall will complete the SCORP research this year.

First Day Hikes - Charles Salkin

On January 1, 2012, America's State Parks hosted *First Day Hikes* nationwide, to kick off 2012. From Florida to Alaska and Maine to California, across the country, in all 50 states, over 14,000 people participated by celebrating the New Year hiking in a state park facility. This event was sponsored by the State Park systems throughout the US.

Delaware State Parks & Recreation had seven hike sites and approximately 25 people participated at each location. The event was a success. Parks anticipates holding First Day Hikes on the first day of each year.

Project Updates

Pomeroy Trail - Charles Emerson, Council Member

The City of Newark is satisfied with the progress on the Pomeroy Trail. The weather has cooperated. Merit Construction is building the 1.7-mile trail. The City of Newark has been working on the Pomeroy Trail project for the last seven years. The trail, which has a rail-trail theme, will be fully lighted, with 24-hour emergency call boxes. It connects to three of Newark's parks, including White Clay Creek State Park. Construction is expected to be complete in early fall with an opening ceremony. Senator Carper was instrumental in securing funding for this project.

The City of Newark received DTF funding for the Curtis Paper Mill project, which is close to the Pomeroy Trail, and will serve as a nearby trailhead among other functions. A master plan is complete; Newark will be hiring a consultant for site design.

Gordons Pond Trail - Susan Moerschel & Richard Phifer

Gordons Pond Trail is an existing 1.8-mile trail linking the northern and southern sections of Cape Henlopen State Park. The almost 1-mile that is accessible, ends at an observation platform overlooking Gordons Pond; the other 1-mile is predominately sand and closed for portions of the year.

The Working Group comprised of David Bartoo, Mike Krumrine, Lee Ann Walling, Karen Bennett, Rob Line and others (natural and cultural resource specialists), met to define an alignment that avoided natural and cultural resources.

Rich Phifer said a public meeting was held at the Lewes Public Library on December 15, 2011 to discuss the proposed Gordons Pond Trail plan with the community. A questionnaire was given to the 58 attendees. Parks received the same number of responses through emails and paper. A majority of respondents approved the project but asked for connectivity to other trails.

This trail will be part of a 15.5-mile loop through Cape Henlopen State Park, Lewes, and Rehoboth with a portion falling on the Junction & Breakwater Trail. Segments over the highly sensitive resource areas with dune fields, wetlands, archaeological, and wetland sites will have boardwalk surfaces.

White Clay Creek State Park (WCCSP) - Susan Moerschel

The final draft of the WCCSP Trail Plan was proposed to consultants, Whitman, Requardt & Associates, LLP. They will provide a quote for engineering/designing this 2.2-mile section of trail in the Possum Hill area of WCCSP. When complete, the trail will connect to the upper portion of the Pomeroy Trail and end at Route 72 and Paper Mill Road. The trail system was designed to meet environmentally and socially

sustainable trail standards; reduce soil erosion; avoid important natural and cultural resource areas; connect park management units; and create community connections. The Division is also proposing to convert, by re-designating some roads-to-trails. A portion of Creek Road is likely to be the first.

Auburn Heights Preserve - Matthew Chesser

Matt Chesser discussed the connection between Auburn Heights Preserve and the NVF project outlined in a comprehensive plan that includes land protection, historic rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, and trails. DNREC has also leveraged funding between Open Space, FEMA, and private partners. Of the 180-acres in the Preserve, 109-acres are currently in some form of permanent protection. The Auburn Heights Mansion is home to the world's largest operating collection of antique steam cars and known for many years as the 'Steam Team.' Tom Marshall, former owner, often held events and would open his home and museum to visitors. Mr. Marshall donated this property to Delaware State Parks.

DNREC's plan for this area includes a 6-mile loop trail that will connect the Preserve and the Overseer Property and a possible Rail with Trail segment into Hockessin. Trails will be open for bikes, pedestrians, equestrians, and vintage cars. A 1-mile trail loop adjacent to the Mansion will be constructed this spring. Area bridge planning is needed. The Wilmington & Western Rail line (also very strong partners) runs through the property.

New Castle Industrial Track Greenway Trail - Jonathan Husband, New Castle County

The New Castle Industrial Track Rail Trail is constructed in three phases. First phase: begins at R273/Delaware Street to Boulden Blvd and the Little League complex, just south of I-295. Second phase: I-295 crossing. Third phase: I-295 to the Christina River. Phase 1 was completed with ARRA funds; phase 3 will be constructed with a DTF grant [matched by ARRA funds].

Hiking Community Report - Wendel Cassel, Council Member

Pennsylvania purchased the tri-state Mason-Dixon corner-marker property on December 28, 2011. Wendel requested, but has not received, approval from Bill Morton, PA White Clay Preserve manager, to conduct trail upgrades on the site. Mr. Salkin discussed this project with Dave Bartoo who will be contacting the Pennsylvania Regional State Park Office. Delaware State Parks' planning efforts identified trail connections to the tri-state marker as a possible sustainable trail project that both states could collaborate.

Wendel met with Dave Bartoo and consulted with the Land Conservancy for Southern Chester County on the Red Clay Greenway project. The ultimate goal is to connect communities regionally from Kennett Square to the Auburn Heights area. The challenge is utilizing the flood plain adjacent to the Red Clay Creek.

Mason Dixon Greenway - South Park - the first segment of the greenway between Fair Hill and White Clay Creek, completed this past summer, is now open. London Bridge Township is still working on the remaining connections between South Park and the White Clay Creek Preserve.

Equestrian Community – Peggy Koster, Council Member

The Equine Council's mission is to promote, protect, and enhance the keeping of equine in Delaware. The equestrian community participated in the First Day Hike on January 1, 2012. Over 100 horses and riders attended the event in Sussex County.

New Castle County experienced an unpleasant incident whereby a young woman forced her horse to go over a bridge [not designed for horse use]. The horse sustained injuries that required it to be euthanized.

The Equine Council is working on the 2012 Equine directory [for which State Parks provides a comprehensive list of horse riding locations at statewide sites]. The Equine Council is also working on their scholarship fund-raising, which donates \$5,000 each year to a student in equine studies.

Mountain Biking – Jim Ireland, Council Member

The organization is working on Newark's 2-mile Redd Park trail project. This trail will have connections up to near White Clay Creek State Park and Newark's Reservoir Park. The Delaware Trail Spinners completed the all-weather component of the trail and the 2,000 linear feet of rock garden style trail. Volunteers put in over 3,600-hours in this project to date.

Other volunteer hours spent on trails projects include: 700-hours at Middle Run Valley Natural Area (NCC); 80-hours at Iron Hill (NCC); 50-hours at Lums Pond State Park (NCC); 1,000+ hours at Fair Hill Natural Resources Management Area (MD).

Bicycle Council – Mike Krumrine

Bicycle Council members met with representatives from DelDOT to revisit the idea of reestablishing a funding pool to be used for bicycle and pedestrian projects. The preliminary idea is to establish pools of money of about \$250,000 for each county. The funds will be used primarily to complete smaller gap type bicycle and pedestrian projects. At the December 2011 meeting, the Bike Council voted to draft a letter of support for the proposed funding to Governor Markell and DelDOT Secretary Bhatt. Bicycle Council hopes to send the letter and list of potential projects to the Governor by April 2012, in time for the Bond Bill hearings.

Secretary O'Mara said the revenue projections are bad this next fiscal year; there are Medicare & Medicaid cost increases, education increases, and cuts in federal funding. Nevertheless, Governor Markell is working to find additional funds for trails and actually build it into the budget as opposed to having trail funds coming through the Bond Bill. The direction is to focus on high priority projects.

Secretary O'Mara said another Department initiative is the Delaware Bayshore area and finding ways to increase access to Delaware's resources, such as shorebirds, horseshoe crabs, and many more. Approximately fifty-eight percent of Bayshore land is protected. The Bayshore region offers an incredible opportunity to explore the natural and cultural resources [along the Bayshore]. 'I would like to get Council's input once DNREC is ready to discuss this issue,' Secretary O'Mara said.

Mary Everhart requested better parking access for the equestrian community and asked that the community be allowed to help by clearing paths. Equestrian trail mileage in Delaware breaks down as follows: New Castle County has 60-miles; Kent County has 21-miles and Sussex County has 43-miles.

Announcements

Use of Electronic Personal Assistance Mobility Devices Policy

Use of Electronic Personal Assistance Mobility Devices Policy for recreation trail facilities - Effective March 15, 2012 the Department of Justice will employ new rules regarding access in public areas. These rules apply to people with mobility disabilities, allowing them to use power driven devices more broadly. The Division has drafted a policy that specifically states the types of mobility devices allowable for use in State Parks. Susan asked Council to review and provide input on the draft policy and respond to Dave Bartoo. Charlie Emerson said there should be an interdepartmental discussion, to be consistent.

Susan said the new Inlet River Bridge would be partially opened on January 20, 2012.

Peggy Koster thanked Secretary O'Mara for attending and giving his presentation and welcomed him to future meetings.

Next Council meeting is Wednesday, April 11, 2012 at the Department of Agriculture, S. DuPont Highway, Dover, starting 9:30 AM.

Adjourn

Ms. Koster asked for a motion to adjourn. Charles Emerson motioned and Jim Ireland seconded. Meeting adjourned at 12:20 PM.

Meeting Attendance

Appointed Members

Wendel Cassel
Charles Emerson
Mary Everhart
James Ireland
Peggy Koster, Acting Chair
John Martin

Agency Members

Secretary Collin O'Mara, DNREC
Lynn Riley, Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs
Charles Salkin, Director, Division of Parks & Recreation

Guests

Denise Husband, Environmental Design
Andrea Trabelsi, Delaware Greenways, Inc.

Staff of the Division of Parks and Recreation

Matthew Chesser
Bob Ehemann
Mike Krumrine
Susan Moerschel
Rich Phifer
Kendall Sommers
Rose Ryödi